

Peace Index - March 2011

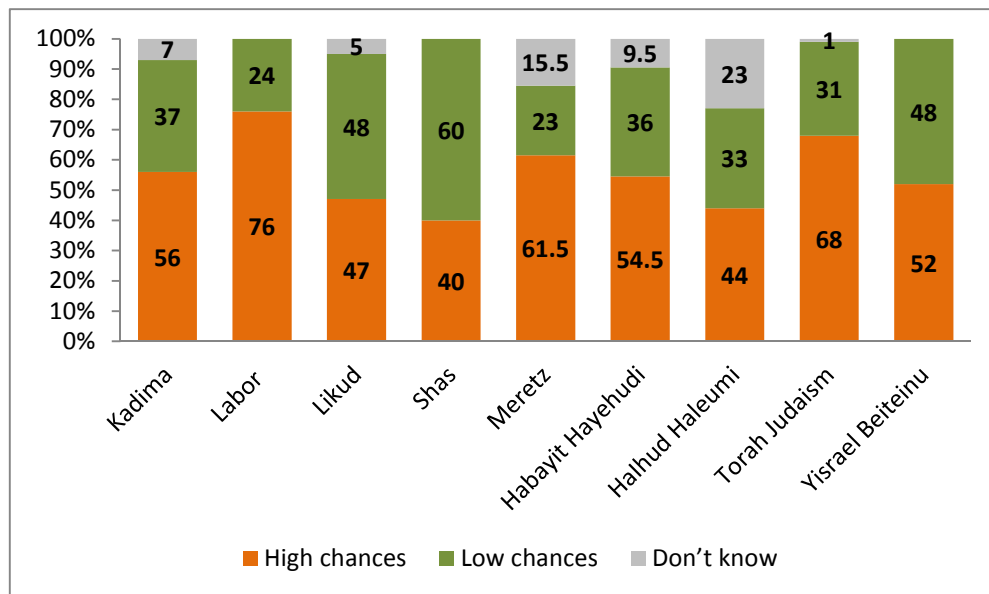
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Summary of the Findings

- **To what extent do the popular struggles currently being waged in the Arab countries interest the citizens of Israel?** The popular struggles are definitely of interest to them. Seventy-nine percent of the Israeli Jewish public and 74% of the Israeli Arab public say these struggles interest them or even strongly interest them.
- **An Arab revolt? Not here.** A majority of the Jewish public (57%) sees low chances of an uprising of Palestinians in the West Bank that would be similar to the popular struggles in the Arab countries. A more solid majority (68%) sees low chances of a similar uprising among Israeli Arab citizens. The same pattern of opinion was found in the Israeli Arab sector: 68% view the chances of an uprising in the West Bank as low, and a very large majority (79%) see the chances of such an uprising within Israel as low.
- **Are the popular, anti-regime struggles in the Arab countries good or bad for the peoples of the region?** A majority of the Jewish public (52%) views these struggles as positive for the peoples of the Middle East. The Arab public's assessment is even more positive, with 65% seeing these struggles that way.
- **And from Israel's standpoint?** Here, too, the prevailing tendency in the Jewish public (47%) is to perceive the recent developments in the Arab world as positive, although 30% of Jewish respondents see them in a negative light and close to one-fourth do not know. The Arab public's views on this question tend to be more positive: 55.5% see the developments as positive for Israel and 34% as negative (the rest do not know).
- **And what about the likely effect of the events in the Arab world on the chances for peace?** The prevailing view in the Jewish public (38%) is that the events in the Arab world will have no effect, for good or bad, on the peace process in the foreseeable future. At the same time, the rate of those who believe the events will have a positive effect (22.5%) is slightly lower than the rate of those who think that the effect will be negative (27.3%), if there is any effect at all. A different distribution of opinion was found among the Arab public: the prevailing view (48%) is that the regional developments will positively affect the chances for peace, while 31% foresee a negative effect. Only 18% think the events in the region will have no effect on the peace issue at all.

- **Should Israel take an initiative or remain passive?** Only a minority of the Jewish public (28%) agrees with the position that the Middle Eastern upheavals will create new opportunities and, hence, that Israel should make a new effort to reach a regional peace. The overwhelming majority (70%) accepts the position that the situation at the moment is unclear, and therefore it is better for Israel to remain passive and not do anything. The distribution of views among Israeli Arabs is the opposite, although not a polar opposite: while 58% of Israeli Arabs think Israel should take a peace initiative, a large minority (40%) says Israel should watch the developments in the Arab countries from the sidelines and not do anything.
- **Is the Western countries' intervention in Libya good or bad?** A slim majority (52%) of the Jewish Israelis favors the intervention that sided with the rebels in Libya, but a considerable minority (43%) takes the opposite stance. The trend among Israeli Arabs is similar, but the gap between supporters (62%) and opponents (34%) is larger.
- **And what are the chances of similar Western intervention in the West Bank?** An overwhelming majority (75%) of the Jewish public sees the chances for Western intervention in the event of an uprising of Palestinians in the West Bank in which the IDF deploys troops and uses force against the local population as low. In the Arab public as well, a majority, though smaller (59%), sees the chances of this as low.
- **And what about Western pressure for peace?** As for the possibility that the desire to gain favor in the Arab world would lead to greater Western pressure on Israel to advance the peace process with the Palestinians, opinions are divided. Some 51.5% of Jewish Israelis see the chances for this at present as high, while 44% see it as low. Views in the Arab sector are split down the middle, with 47% assessing the chances for Western pressure on Israel as high and just about the same proportion regarding them as low.

Graph of the month:
**Assessment of the Chances that the West will Pressure Israel to Advance the
Peace Process with the Palestinians—Distributed by Voting in the Last Elections
(Jewish sample)**



The Findings in Detail

The popular uprisings in the Arab countries arouse great interest in the Israeli public, with 79% of Jewish Israelis and 74% of Arab Israelis responding that they are interested or very interested in these events. Along with the general interest, there are certain disparities between subgroups: 83% of members of the Jewish public who define themselves as center or left say they are interested in the uprisings, while a lower rate (72%) of those who define themselves as right say the same. A segmentation by age also revealed disparities, which were even greater: in the youngest age group (18-24), less than half of the respondents (46%) expressed interest in what is currently happening in Arab countries, while in the oldest age group (65 and over), 84% reported being interested. Perhaps paradoxically, the rate of those interested among Israeli Jews of European or American decent and among the second generation of respondents of European or American extraction was considerably higher than among Israeli Jews of Asia or Africa decent and second generation respondents from those places: 89% vs. 74%. Unlike many other questions concerning the Middle East and particularly the Arab-Israeli conflict, on this question no disparities were found between respondents with different levels of religiosity.

As for the chances that Palestinians in the West Bank will emulate the citizens of Arab countries and launch an uprising against Israel, 57% of Jewish Israelis—a majority, although not large—assess these chances as low. A large majority (68%) of the Arab public sees the situation this way as well. Regarding the chances for a popular uprising by Israeli Arabs, in this case, an even greater number view the chances as low: 68% of Jewish respondents and 79% of Arabs respondents. Note that there is a large overlap between the assessments on the two issues, suggesting common perceptions regarding Israeli Arabs and Palestinians in the territories. Among the Jews, 75% of those who believe the chances of an uprising against Israel in the West Bank are low made the same assessment for an uprising by Israeli Arabs. Likewise, 71% of those viewing the chances of a West Bank uprising as high thought the same concerning the chances for an Arab uprising within Israel.

As for the likely effect of the popular Arab uprisings on the peoples of the region, a slim majority of the Jewish public (52%) sees the effect of these uprisings as positive. The Arab public's assessment—65%—is more positive. A segmentation of the Jewish public's responses by their voting for the Knesset in the latest elections turns up one notable anomaly: 91% (!) of Meretz voters view the popular uprisings in the Arab countries as positive from the standpoint of the peoples of the region. Among voters for Torah Judaism and Shas, only a minority (45% and 48% respectively) regards these developments as positive.

As for the effects of the uprisings on the countries bordering Israel, here the uncertainty is higher. While the prevailing tendency in the Jewish public (47%) is to perceive these effects positively, 30% of Jewish respondents see them in a negative light and close to one-fourth do not know. A segmentation by voting shows that only among Meretz voters does a substantial majority (58%) view the uprisings in the Arab world as positive from Israel's standpoint. As for the Arab public, its assessments, similarly to the results found for the previous question, tend to be more positive; here, too, however, uncertainty apparently plays a role: 55.5% see the developments as positive, 34% as negative, and 10.5% do not know.

And what of the likely effect on the chances for peace? Here the Jewish public's uncertainty is even greater. A bit over a third (38%) expect that the events in the Arab world will have neither a negative nor a positive effect on the peace process in the foreseeable future. The rate of those who anticipate a negative effect (27.3%), if any, is slightly larger for those expecting a positive effect (22.5%), if any. A segmentation by voting reveals that a clearly higher rate of respondents see a positive effect among Kadima and Meretz voters (39% and 41% respectively) than among voters for all other

parties. On this issue, the distribution of opinion in the Arab public is different: the prevailing view (48%) is that the regional events will positively affect the chances for peace, with 31% seeing a negative influence. Only 18% think that the events will have no effect on the peace issue.

Many people are currently asking what Israel should do in light of the developments in the Arab world: take an initiative or remain passive? Last month, we found that a majority believes that Israel's leaders acted correctly in refraining from a public response to the events in Egypt. It turns out that this preference pertains to other aspects of the developments in the region as well. Only a minority of the Jewish public (28%) agrees with the position that the Middle Eastern upheavals have created new opportunities and, hence, that Israel should now make an effort to reach a regional peace. Conversely, the overwhelming majority (70%) agrees with the position that the current situation is unclear and, therefore, it is better for Israel to remain passive and not do anything. Among Israeli Arabs, who were also found to support the non-response policy toward Egypt in last month's poll, the distribution of opinions regarding an Israeli peace initiative is, in fact, the reverse, though not in a polar manner: 58% think Israel should launch a peace initiative, but a large minority (40%) says Israel should observe the developments in the Arab countries from the sidelines without doing anything.

The intervention of the Western countries in Libya also warrants a reaction, or at least consideration, on Israel's part. Indeed, it turns out that Israelis have been attentive to the intervention and do not give it widespread support. A slim majority of Jewish Israelis (52%) favor the intervention on the rebels' side in Libya, but a considerable minority (43%) takes the opposite stance. Interestingly, the support of Arab Israelis for the Western intervention is greater (62%), and the opposition is smaller (34%). We asked ourselves whether the disparities here stem from different assessments on the part of members of the two sectors of the chances of Western intervention in the event that a Third Intifada were to erupt in the West Bank and the IDF were to deploy troops and use great force against the Palestinian population there. It turns out that the prevailing assessment of both Jews and Arabs is that, in such a case, the chances for a Western intervention would be small: an overwhelming majority (75%) of the Jewish public sees the chances as small and a smaller majority (59%) of the Arab public sees them as small. Note that for the Jewish public, a segmentation by Knesset voting revealed that those who tend to fear a Western pro-Palestinian intervention in the West Bank are the same as the findings regarding the perception of the impact of the uprising in Arab countries, and almost at the same rate—voters for Torah Judaism and Shas (42%).

And what are the chances that an attempt to gain favor in the eyes of the Arab world will lead to greater Western pressure on Israel to advance the peace process with the

Palestinians? Some 51.5% of the Jews currently see the chances of this as high, while 44% regard the chances as low. The views among Arab respondents are evenly split, with 47% indicating that the chances of Western pressure on Israel to agree to a peace initiative regarding the Palestinians are high, and just about an identical rate viewing them as low. Here segmentation by voting revealed that members of the Jewish sector who foresee Western pressure on Israel to agree to a peace initiative are mainly voters for Labor (76%), Torah Judaism (68%), and Meretz (61.5%).

The Negotiations Index for March, 2011

The Peace Index project includes ongoing monitoring of the Israeli public's attitudes towards peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. The monthly Negotiation Index is comprised of two questions, one focusing on public support for peace negotiations and the other on the degree to which the public believes that such talks will actually lead to peace. The aggregated replies to these two questions are calculated, combined, and standardized on a scale of 0-100, in which 0 represents total lack of support for negotiations and lack of belief in their potential to bear fruit, and 100 represents total support for the process and belief in its potential. Each month, the Negotiations Index presents two distinct findings, one for the general Israeli population and the other for Jewish Israelis.

Negotiation Index: General sample 47.0; Jewish sample 45.3.

The Peace Index is a project of the [Evans Program for Conflict Resolution](#) at Tel Aviv University and [the Israel Democracy Institute](#). This month's survey was conducted by telephone on March 23-24, 2011 by the Dahaf Institute. The survey included 601 respondents, who constitute a representative sample of the adult Jewish population of Israel. The measurement error for a sample of this size is 4.5%; statistical processing was done by Ms. Yasmin Alkalay.